

CLOTHING FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

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The first years of a child's life are a time of constant movement and rapid growth. At each stage of development there are new skills and activities learned, and special requirements for clothing. Comfort, safety and growth features that will provide protection and freedom of movement should be considered in each phase of growth. Other factors important to parents include durability, convenient dressing, care and economy.

Physical Development and Motor Skills

From birth until a child's third birthday, physical growth and muscular development are rapidly changing. The child first learns gross movements using large muscle skills and progresses to small muscle coordination. By one year of age most children are crawling and some are walking. Their boundless energy will require clothing that is durable as well as adaptable to a changing physique.

During a child's second year he learns to run and play and will need clothing that does not restrict or hamper his movements. Between a child's second and third birthdays he begins to learn to dress and undress himself with some help and can name various garments. His fine muscle coordination is increasing, and he begins to operate zippers and buttons.

At the toddler stage a child usually continues to wear diapers. His body is rounded with short legs and arms and a head that is large in proportion to the rest of the body. As a child leaves the toddler stage, arms and legs lengthen and the torso slims down.

Clothes for Growth

Infants and toddlers grow rapidly during their first three years. To help maintain an attractive ap-

pearance and proper fit, well-designed clothes have features that allow for some growth. Children's garments designed with growth features may be worn longer than those without, thus, postponing the necessity for new clothing purchases. These features include:

- Adjustable straps or straps that can be lengthened by moving buttons.
- Elastic inserts that provide room for expansion.
- Knitted or stretch garments that will "give" to allow for growth.



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- Tucks and pleats that can be let out to add length or width to a garment.
- Wide seams at the center back of pants that can be let out as needed.
- Undefined waistlines in one-piece garments.



- Raglan sleeves that do not bind as shoulders broaden.
- Two rows of snaps or buttons to attach tops and bottoms of sleepwear.
- Two-piece garments usually provide more room for growth than fitted one-piece items.

Comfort Features

Infants and toddlers need comfortable clothing that neither irritates nor binds and provides protection from severe weather. A newborn gives discomfort distress signals by crying, perspiring or shivering. Periodic checks on the temperature of an infant's skin, for rashes and for restricting or binding garments will help parents judge their baby's comfort. One rule of thumb is to dress an infant with the same number of layers adults are wearing.

Toddlers can usually express their degree of comfort more explicitly than an infant, but parents need to check for garments that allow freedom of movement, and do not bind or scratch delicate skin. Comfortable clothes for infants and toddlers:

- Have adequate fullness for bending, sitting, stretching and crawling.
- Fit smoothly and do not bind or bag.
- Hang from the shoulders rather than binding the neck.
- Are soft and absorbent.
- Do not scratch or create a rash.
- Cover the feet at night for warmth.

Since infants wear diapers constantly, be sure the edges are folded in and do not chafe. Some pre-folded diapers may not fit very large or very small infants.

Proper Fit

Comfort also depends on proper fit. Clothing that is too large can hamper freedom of movement as much as garments that are too tight. To select the proper size, try the garment on the child before purchasing. When this is not possible, buy clothing according to the child's weight and measurements; *not* age. Infants' clothes are sized by height and weight; toddlers, by height, weight, chest and waist. Toddlers' sizes can be identified by the **T** following the numeral. Toddlers' and children's sizes are often designed for the same body measurements, except that toddlers' sizes allow extra room through the seat and crotch for diapers. For a proper fit, buy the size that best corresponds to the child's measurements.

Toddlers' Body Measurements By Size

Measurement	Sizes			
	1	2T	3T	4T
Stature - Inches	31	34	37	40
Weight - Pounds (approx.)	25	29	34	38
Chest	20	21	22	23
Waist	20	20½	21	21½

Infants' Body Measurements By Size

Measurement	Sizes					
	3 mos.	6 mos.	12 mos.	18 mos.	24 mos.	36 mos.
Stature - Inches	24	26½	29	31½	34	36½
Weight - Pounds	13	18	22	26	29	32

Safety Features

For protection, select safe clothing that is suitable to the child's age and stage of development. For infants, cleanliness is important to health and safety. Clothing that can be cleaned easily and frequently is a good choice. When selecting gowns or kimonos, avoid drawstrings or elastic that tightens around the neck, wrists or ankles. Drawstring closures that tie beyond the feet are safe to use.

As infants develop into toddlers, they become more active and spend time playing on the floor. Toddlers may need long pants to protect legs and knees from rough or cold floors. Pants should not be long enough to trip the child. Cuffs on pants can be dangerous if caught in tricycle pedals or other objects. Look for cuffs that are stitched at the top or select pants without cuffs. Loose sashes or ties on clothing may be caught on play equipment or other objects as children run and jump. Be sure that trims, appliques and other decorative details are securely attached and cannot be pulled off and swallowed.

All fabric used in infants' and toddlers' sleepwear must be flame retardant. This protection is enforced by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Some stores also offer children's playwear with flame retardant protection.

Durability

Clothing durability depends on fabric and workmanship. Infants and toddlers need clothes that are soft and lightweight, yet durable enough to withstand frequent washing and wearing. Garments in both woven and knitted fabrics may be labeled "1 percent maximum shrinkage", "preshrunk", or "colorfast." These terms mean that the fabrics have been specially treated to maintain size or color. Check quality of knitted T-shirts, underwear and play clothes by holding up to the light to detect any unevenness in fabric or color. Other indicators of good quality are clothing warranties found on hangtags or packaging which usually guarantee a garment for one year's normal wear.



Sturdy clothes that are well-constructed are most practical. Look for these points when shopping for infants and toddlers clothing:

- Seams that do not ravel or pull out.
- Snaps with reinforced backing.
- Buttonholes that are stitched evenly and do not pull out by a loose thread.
- Elastic that is encased.
- Buttons that are sewn on securely.
- Bar tacks at points of stress such as where straps are attached.

Since clothing with all of these good points may be expensive or difficult to find, the homemaker can reinforce seams, stitch bar tacks or re sew buttons to improve the quality and durability of garments.

Convenient Dressing

Parents of infants and toddlers usually want clothing that will make dressing and changing their children quick and easy. Clothes that are simple in design with few pieces are easiest to take on and off. Most babies do not like to have clothing pulled over their heads, so shirts, dresses, sleepers and kimonos which fasten all the way down the front are good choices. Large or stretchy openings make slip-over garments easy to handle. Disposable diapers are convenient, especially for travel. Snap or zipper crotches that open down one or both legs are best for quick diaper changes. Easy to operate closures that are conveniently located help ease of dressing and encourage independent dressing in toddlers.



Care of Clothing

To save time, money and energy, easy-care clothing is a good choice. Labels provide information on care instructions, fiber content and special finishes. Check for labels that include: "machine washable," "permanent press," "soil release," "little or no ironing," "crease resistant," and "stain resistant."

Some of the flame retardant fabrics, found in all children's sleepwear, require special care and treatment to maintain their flame resistant qualities after washing. The care labels identify laundry products or treatments that could adversely affect the flame resistance. Follow the instructions carefully to insure flame resistant protection after laundering.

Consumer Tips for Economy

- Consider spending the most money on clothing that is worn and laundered most frequently.
- Keep the wardrobe active by only buying a few garments that are worn often so that clothes are worn-out by the time they are outgrown.
- Consider the number of gifts that may be received before buying many garments, especially infant's clothing.
- Compare prices and workmanship at children's shops, department stores and discount stores.
- When planning the type of diaper to use, compare costs between cloth diapers washed at home or laundromat, a diaper service and disposable diapers.
- Explore garage sales, used clothing stores or clothing exchange shops for good inexpensive clothing.
- Recycle adult or other children's clothing by remaking or updating with trims, appliques, embroidery and other decorations.

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